Jim —

2/27

I hope the attached is useful. I did not give this review all the attention it deserves, but just the reading task was monumental. If you have any questions, they will have to wait — I'll be out of town until 3/16.

STATINTL   Doug

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Comments on the
Program Plan for a National Information
System for Psychology (1970-75)

In my judgment the Plan for NISP is worthy of significant
NSF support. It is one of the best overall plans of its size and
scope that I have seen in the information transfer field.

--It is well balanced. It seems to give the attention
appropriate to each facet of the problem.

--It is practical. While the time schedule, cost, and
manning levels are optimistic, it is clear that
the people involved have few illusions regarding the
developmental problems they face.

--It is flexible. The methodology used in narrowing
the many possible options available in each area
is rational, and more important, minimizes
backtracking if changes in direction are necessary
as more experience is gained.

--It is thoughtful and creative. The clarity of the
exposition clearly demonstrates the high quality
of the analysis and the superior intellectual equip-
ment of the people involved thus far.

Some general comments on the three points requested:

1. Probable value in relation to cost: Although this is difficult
to judge, I believe an investment at or near the proposed level is
worthwhile. I base this less on the expected return than on the quality
of the work already accomplished and perhaps an overaction in finding
an oasis of clear thinkers in an otherwise frustrating desert of platitudes
and half-baked ideas in this field.

The publication subsystem seems to address the well-known problems of timeliness, selection, and cost in a fruitful way. The unit communication idea, while not new, was analyzed carefully before it was proposed (not just wrapped in rhetoric).

The bibliographic control system offers less promise. It sticks to the essentials and it appears that the usual approaches will be doggedly pursued. However, the nagging doubts that face all those pursuing high cost goals in content-controlled retrieval and dissemination linger on.

The proposals for informal communication are innovative, but one wonders about the informality that can be achieved in a professional community of this size, no matter how it is subdivided. It is almost a contradiction: it would seem that the benefits of informal communication will be achieved in spite of, not because of, the APA (or any other large professional institution). However, to the extent that the APA can perform a catalytic role, the plan represents a best effort.

2. The APA mandate: I have no knowledge or experience relevant to this question.

3. Is this a responsible plan? Has the APA embraced it? Again, I cannot help on the latter question. I do consider the plan the product of mature, responsible people. The goals are timely, but ambitious. Taken individually, the proposed tasks are tractable; in the aggregate, they are less so because of the complex orchestration effort involved. However, I believe they need to be pursued concurrently if perpetuation of the present patchwork "system" is to be avoided. Setbacks and some outright failures will occur, but the risks seem tolerable. I doubt that any of the major milestones will be achieved within the proposed schedules. On the one hand, the work seems to be organized in a way that the degree of slippage will not have a linear relationship to cost overruns.

Some specific criticisms:

1. I saw little discussion which <u>directly</u> addresses the possibility of reducing the 6 to 7 month lag in <u>Psychological Abstracts</u> publication. The "early alert" scheme is an indirect approach.

2. The proposal assumes outside service bureau support for the computer processing involved, and notes that an in-house facility (beyond the 360/20) will eventually be needed. Has the computer load

been reviewed carefully? The scope of activities, regardless
of the rather modest _volume_ anticipated, seem considerable.
Fixed costs of computer resources for each of the tasks, even
with small amount of actual running time, can add up to significant
amounts early on. I would suspect that the need for an in-house
computer will surface sooner than anticipated. Have the manage-
ment and operational costs of an in-house computer--no matter
when needed--been estimated?

3. It would appear the publication lags for the new _Journal_
of Professional Psychology would be crucial, considering its
prospective audience and substance. Will the publication lag here
be tolerable?

4. The "Special Requirements of Psychology" (p. 2. 4) note
that "there is no large... complex... to underwrite the system on
a continuing basis." The continuity question should also be raised
with regard to the ability of APA/OCMD to grow and _hold_ a team
to see the development effort through the critical five years ahead.
There was no in-house expert identified to closely monitor software
contracts, for example.

5. In several places, the Plan notes that the high degree of
selectivity by editors is a problem. I question this: The new
approaches to be used, regardless of the cost/benefit analysis to
be employed, may have an undesirable eroding effect on the quality
of all the material accepted and passed on. More, rather than less
vigilance seems to be called for.

6. One problem was not mentioned in relation to the market
for unit communication items: the restrictions (or lack thereof)
on customer reproduction of the APA product. Groups of users may
set up their own reproduction and distribution procedures, reducing
APA revenue.

7. Suggestion: the experience of the Department of Defense
(DDC and its predecessors) may be useful in designing the procedural
aspects of demand reproduction and distribution of items.

8. The combinatorial possibilities in the creation of the varied
user profiles seem quite large. Passing these against potential items
of interest could be a staggering computer task--a bottleneck in
current SDI and related dissemination systems.

9. My experience suggests that the schedule for task f, relating to bibliographic control software, is very optimistic unless an already available package can be used (doubtful).

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20550

<u>Office of Science Information Service</u>

February 3, 1970

STATINTL

Deputy Director of Computer Services
Central Intelligence Agency
STATINTL Washington, D. C. 20505

Enclosed is a copy of the <u>Program Plan for a National Information System for Psychology (1970-75)</u>, which has recently been prepared by the American Psychological Association. A number of specific proposals for National Science Foundation support in connection with the <u>Program</u> are now under consideration, and I hope that you will be willing to assist us in its evaluation.

While any comments you may care to make on the <u>Program</u> will be of interest to us, we should be particularly grateful for your judgment on the three points which we have indicated on the attached sheet. We would appreciate having your comments by February 27, 1970, if that is at all possible.

Sincerely yours,

Jim

James H. Joy
Assistant Program Director
for Information Systems

Enclosures